

# Introduction

*The essence of being an effective  
teacher lies in knowing what to do to foster pupils'  
learning and being able to do it.*

—Kyriancou (1991, p. 1)

“Do you have any positive results yet?” I asked a high school principal who was implementing a ninth-grade drop-out prevention program.

“The numbers look good,” she said, “but it was the day that Mr. McIntire’s class taught itself that I knew we were onto something.

“I was scheduled to cover his first-period class so he could close on his new house,” she explained. “But an emergency came up and I totally forgot.”

When Mr. McIntire stopped in later to thank the principal for her thoughtful gesture, she had to confess that she had blown it.

“Who taught my class?” he asked, with a worried look, imagining 30 adolescents up to no good in the freshman wing.

Actually, Mr. McIntire’s class taught itself. His students had mastered what he explicitly taught them during the first 3 weeks of the school year, and left on their own, they did what any well-taught class will do—followed his routines, rubrics, and rules to the letter. No one, not even the assistant principal who was doing an observation in the classroom next door, realized that Mr. M’s class was flying solo. This incident is a perfect example of the “big idea” of this book— $3 + 3 = 33$ —in action. Perhaps you doubt that *your* students are capable of the same level of self-direction, independence, and responsibility that Mr. McIntire’s students displayed. However, you won’t know until you implement  $3 + 3 = 33$  for yourself.

## The “Big Idea” of $3 + 3 = 33$

If you have played team sports or are a sports fan, you know the importance of effective coaching. Great coaches develop game plans. Their plans generally include practice routines for building basic skills, conditioning routines for

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developing strength and confidence, and set plays and strategies that team members have practiced to automaticity. When a game is close or the opposition puts on defensive pressure, players are able to draw on well-taught, intensively practiced routines mastered to perfection—how to inbound the basketball with only 3.1 seconds on the clock to make the game-winning shot, or how to create scoring opportunities when the other team has the ball and the clock is running down.

In your classroom, you are the “coach.” You are responsible for developing a plan to maximize your students’ academic success during the 36 weeks of the school year. In most states, standards and outcomes are prescribed in detail. But *how* you go about creating an environment to achieve those outcomes is up to you. You can either “wing it,” or you can get “with-it.” Teachers who wing it plan as they go. They are serendipitous and spontaneous. They go with the flow.

With-it teachers (WITs), on the other hand, are structured and organized. They are proactive pedagogues who know precisely how they want their students to “play” the academic game. Kounin (1970) coined the term “with-it-ness” and defined it as “overlappingness,” the ability to multitask while teaching. Bullough (1989) later expanded the definition to include “the ability to simultaneously attend to a variety of stimuli and then to appropriately categorize what is observed and quickly respond in a way that will prevent disruption and maintain the flow of the lesson” (p. 47).

In *10 Traits of Highly Effective Teachers*, I expanded this definition of with-it-ness and included it as one of the ten traits of highly effective teachers: “the state of being on top of, tuned in to, aware of, and in complete control of three critical facets of classroom life: (1) the management and organization of the classroom, (2) the engagement of students, and (3) the management of time” (McEwan, 2002, p. 48). In the chapters ahead, I offer an even more expansive definition of with-it-ness: *the ability to preview, project, and predict the challenges and contingencies of an upcoming school year and proactively design a 3-week set of experiences to teach critical routines, rubrics, and rules that will prepare students for the rigors of mastering the desired content-area or grade-level outcomes.*

The premise of  $3 + 3 = 33$  is that the more consistently you teach your students the routines, rubrics, and rules (3Rs) of your classroom at the beginning of the school year (3 weeks), the more productive the rest of your year (33 weeks) will be. Instead of merely surviving the school year, you (and your students) will thrive. *You* will accomplish more because your students will be prepared to learn. *You* will have fewer discipline problems because your students will have mastered the rules. *You* will have more energy because your students will be carrying their share of the workload. Your principal will adore you. Parents will send you thank-you notes. Your colleagues will secretly envy you. But most important, your students will become high-achieving, self-reliant, independent, lifelong learners.

## How to “Coach” Motivated and Attentive Students

There are at least three types of students in every classroom: (1) students who are attentive, motivated, and ready to learn; (2) students who could be attentive, motivated, and ready to learn, given a supportive classroom learning environment, and (3) students who have their own agendas and will readily take advantage of an unstructured and laissez-faire classroom to do what they please. Perhaps you have heard or even followed the advice given to teachers by some: “Don’t smile until Christmas. Keep the kids guessing and on the edge of their seats, and you’re guaranteed to be a successful teacher.” There’s absolutely no research to support the truth of this statement. But there are four research-based actions that *will* increase your likelihood of being a successful teacher: (1) Be proactive, (2) be nonassumptive, (3) be assertive, and (4) be instructionally relentless. If your goal is to have attentive, motivated, and high-achieving students, read on.

### Be Proactive

There is no substitute for having a detailed plan as you head into any high-stakes, stressful, and complex endeavor, whether it is the first 3 weeks of a school year or the Super Bowl. Bill Belichick, three-time Super Bowl winning coach of the New England Patriots, is known for his meticulous preparation and planning. He believes that games are won before his players take the field (Hack, 2005). The Patriots’ award-winning young quarterback, Tom Brady, is also proactive, described as “ritualistic in his approach and preparation” (Saraceno, 2005, p. 6C). WITs are exactly like Belichick and Brady: painstaking in their preparation and planning. The secret of their students’ high achievement lies in their proactive approach. Proactive teachers instruct “carefully and strategically all that is required so that students will have the information necessary to behave appropriately [and achieve to their fullest potential]” (Kameenui & Darch, 1995, p. 3).

### Be Nonassumptive

The biggest mistake many teachers make—both brand-new *and* experienced ones—is to launch into skills or content instruction without first teaching the 3Rs (routines, rubrics, and rules). They erroneously assume that their students *must* know how to line up, enter a classroom, study for a test, write a book report, greet the teacher, accept a compliment, organize a notebook, sharpen their pencils, or execute dozens of other routines, rubrics, and rules. Unless you explicitly model and explain the essential routines, rubrics, and rules for your classroom, the majority of your students will do what they have always done in the past.

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Your goal is to be a nonassumptive teacher. My personal nominee for a Lifetime Nonassumptive Teacher Award is former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden. He is well known for his multiple NCAA national championships, but his approach to teaching the routines, rubrics, and rules of basketball to his teams is lesser known. The first thing Coach Wooden did each year was to conduct a clinic for his players on how to put on socks and tie shoes. He used that no-fail lesson plan: I Do, We Do It, You Do It, Apply It. Of course, most of the players on his teams were former high school basketball stars who had been putting on their socks and shoes for years. That wasn't the point. Wooden wanted his players to do it his way. He modeled how to "carefully roll the socks down over the toes, ball of the foot, arch, and around the heel, and then pull the sock up snug so there will be no wrinkles in it" (Wooden & Jamison, 1997, p. 60). He knew the importance of this simple routine to the health and well-being of his players' feet, and he wanted to make sure that an important game would never be lost because of painful blisters.

Take a moment to consider what specific student behavior (or lack thereof) is most problematic in your school. Then reflect on how you and your colleagues could design a lesson to teach students a better way to act—one that would produce long-term benefits, save time and energy by eliminating repetitious questions and answers, reduce noise or distractions, improve the quality of life for both students and teachers, and develop more responsible and independent learners. I asked participants in one of my workshops for their ideas regarding this issue, and Ryan Cross, Assistant Principal and Athletic Director of Fernley High School in Nevada, told the following story.

**The biggest problem on our campus was the student parking lot. It was badly designed and covered with loose gravel. Attempts to regulate parking with concrete dividers only resulted in more creative parking formations by students. We had no money to upgrade the lot and countless memos to students and parents produced no improvement. Then a 100-year snowstorm created even more problems.**

**Back on the job after 5 snow days, Principal Sue Segura, her two assistants, Ryan and Pete Chapin, and the district's entire custodial staff donned safety vests and personally directed the parking of the students' cars according to a prescribed plan. The second morning, they repeated the process. On the third morning, they did it again. The custodial staff was growing a bit impatient, but the principal assured them that 4 days of supervised practice were needed for mastery. Sure enough, on the 5th day, every car was parked to perfection—without supervision.**

Never assume that your students, no matter how old they are or how long they have attended your school, will figure out what you want them to do on their own. Even if you tell them what you want done or post announcements on flashing signboards, you may not get results. If you want your routines, rubrics, and rules to be habitually followed by your students, teach them explicitly and systematically, beginning on the first day.

## Be Assertive

You may feel that being assertive and explicit with students, especially if you are a brand-new teacher, is too bossy or controlling. Never apologize, however, for being assertive in your classroom. Assertiveness is a mind-set that impacts the way you communicate (words) and behave (deeds) in your everyday (habitual) interactions with students. It is a positive, forthright approach to teaching that stands in stark contrast to less effective teaching styles characterized by aggressiveness or hesitancy. [The term *assertiveness* as used here should not be confused with the student management system, *assertive discipline*.]

Jill Aspegren is an assertive teacher. Here's how she describes her classroom environment and relationships with students:

**I am in charge in my classroom. I make that clear from the beginning. When I step into my “teaching space,” the area around my stool, I expect all talking to stop. I wait, but I do not speak until it is absolutely quiet and my students are attentive. I teach them to look me in the eyes, sit up straight in their chairs, and place their hands on their desks.**

**My students respect my teaching time because I don't require absolute silence when they are working independently. I ask for a “workable” level of quiet, and my students respect that. Adults in offices rarely work in complete silence, so I don't expect that of my students. I am tough on them during the first few weeks of the school year. I take the time to teach them every little routine and idiosyncrasy of my classroom. But then I give them freedom to learn. I establish myself as the leader, but I also spend a lot of time developing relationships with my students. I ask questions about their lives, notice the small things they do, and give them lots of individual attention. I think it is the balance between my strength [assertiveness] *and* my willingness to enter into relationships that allows us to develop as a learning community.**

## Be Positively Relentless

In my workshops, I humorously describe two categories of teachers: truckers and RVers. I came up with these labels based on two sets of experiences I've had: supervising teachers during my career as an educator *and* driving on the interstate highways of every state in the country during the past decade as a consultant. Each category of drivers has a unique approach to driving, not unlike their educational counterparts. The drivers of RVs are, for the most part, relaxed. They are free to meander, stop for leisurely lunches, or camp where the fishing looks good. On the other hand, truckers are bound by a schedule and tied to a destination. They have no time for serendipitous side trips.

Similar to their over-the-road counterparts, trucker teachers are constantly moving in the direction of their destination. They don't waste time, and their trips are carefully mapped every mile of the way. Here's what one trucker teacher had to say: "I think it's important to give children a sense of urgency . . . places to go, people to meet, things to do. I often tell my students, 'Life is full of deadlines, and our work is almost always evaluated on our ability to finish within a given time frame.'"

In contrast, RV teachers are unfocused and easily distracted. All teachers have moments of RV teaching. But when that approach is the norm, it's time to get back on the road. Trucker teachers are instructionally relentless.

The term *relentless* has two sets of meanings. There is the negative connotation found in adjectives like *punishing* and *ruthless*. But there is also a highly positive set of meanings that includes *uncompromising*, *persistent*, and *insistent*. WITs are instructionally relentless in the most positive sense. They refuse to give in or give up when it comes to teaching and learning. Kameenui & Darch (1995) call this mind-set "instructional tenacity" (p. 13). Unless you are *positively* relentless, your students will lose irreplaceable opportunities to learn.

## The Research Support for 3 + 3 = 33

There is a substantial body of correlational research to support the worth of the concepts inherent in the  $3 + 3 = 33$  game plan. Tables I.1 and I.2 summarize a set of studies conducted from 1977 to 1983 on the topics of classroom management and effective instruction. While correlation research does not meet the "gold" standard of experimental (i.e., scientific) research as defined in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the consistent findings of these studies across many grade levels, schools, and locations make them noteworthy. Table I.3 condenses the findings of three major reviews of the research.

**Table I.1 Correlational Research on Effective Classroom Management and Teaching**

<i>Researchers/ Authors</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Instructional Practices Associated With Increased Student Achievement</i>
Kounin (1977)	Characteristics of effective teachers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher is able to deal with several things at once</li> <li>2. Teacher judges quickly whether an event in the classroom is important or unimportant</li> <li>3. Teacher exhibits an ongoing awareness of all that is happening in the classroom despite numerous distractions</li> <li>4. Teacher times actions carefully for maximum effect</li> <li>5. Teacher maintains group focus by giving attention to more than one student at a time</li> <li>6. Teacher manages movement within the classroom by structuring student transitions</li> </ol>
Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson (1979)	Teaching behaviors of effective teachers at the beginning of the school year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher maximizes personal contact with students</li> <li>2. Teacher monitors students' attitudes, behaviors, and work habits frequently</li> <li>3. Teacher intervenes quickly to deal with behavior problems</li> <li>4. Teacher ensures high levels of time on task</li> <li>5. Teacher provides frequent and detailed feedback</li> <li>6. Teacher structures activities and materials carefully</li> <li>7. Teacher uses signaling systems during instruction</li> <li>8. Teacher establishes clear routines and expectations</li> <li>9. Teacher rehearses with the students the behaviors that match those expectations</li> <li>10. Teacher reduces the structure as students master the routines</li> </ol>
Emmer and Evertson (1980)	Effective management/higher achievement in JHS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher develops a workable system of rules</li> <li>2. Teacher systematically and thoroughly teaches rules and routines</li> <li>3. Teacher carefully monitors pupil behavior and quickly stops inappropriate behavior</li> <li>4. Teacher gives clear directions and holds students accountable</li> <li>5. Teacher stops disruptive behavior, rarely ignoring it when it occurs</li> <li>6. Teacher maintains high on-task rates during the first three weeks of school</li> </ol>

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**Table 1.2 More Correlational Research on Effective Classroom Management and Teaching**

<i>Researchers/ Authors</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Instructional Practices Associated With Increased Student Achievement</i>
Anderson, Evertson, and Emmer (1979); Emmer and Evertson (1980); Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson (1980)	Classroom organization and effective teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher analyzes the tasks of the first few weeks in detail and predicts what will confuse or distract students</li> <li>2. Teacher presents rules, procedures, expectations, and assignments to students in a clear, detailed manner and establishes classroom routines</li> <li>3. Teacher establishes a system of student accountability for behavior and academic work</li> <li>4. Teacher consistently monitors student behavior and work and provides feedback on its appropriateness</li> </ol>
Evertson (1982)	The power of teaching and reinforcing rules	Teachers who spend the first week teaching the rules, carefully monitoring, and consistently enforcing have fewer discipline problems during the year.
Emmer and Evertson (1980)	The power of having and teaching rules and consequences to students	Effective classroom managers have clearly defined rules and procedures to regulate the structure and flow of their classrooms. They explicitly teach students under what circumstances they can interrupt the teacher, when it is appropriate and not appropriate to be out of their seats, and when conversation is appropriate with fellow students.
Duckett et al. (1980)	Most effective approaches to classroom management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher builds group cohesiveness and consensus</li> <li>2. Teacher establishes academic emphasis</li> <li>3. Teacher develops positive teacher-student and student-student relationships</li> </ol>
Wise and Okey (1983)	The power of focusing on learning objectives	The effective classroom appears to be the one in which the students are kept aware of instructional objectives and receive feedback on their progress toward these objectives.

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**Table 1.3** Reviews of Research on Effective Teaching

<i>Researchers/ Authors</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Instructional Practices Associated With Increased Student Achievement</i>
Brophy (1999)	Synthesis of the principles of effective teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A supportive classroom climate</li> <li>2. Curricular alignment</li> <li>3. Thoughtful discourse (questions and discussion about “big ideas”)</li> <li>4. Scaffolding (the provision of help for struggling students)</li> <li>5. Goal-oriented assessment</li> <li>6. High and consistent expectations for achievement</li> </ol>
Marzano, Gaddy, and Dean (2000)	Instructional approaches that improve student achievement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying similarities and differences (e.g., comparing, classifying, creating metaphors and analogies)</li> <li>2. Teaching summarizing and note taking</li> <li>3. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition</li> <li>4. Assigning homework and providing guided practice</li> <li>5. Using nonlinguistic representations (graphic organizers)</li> <li>6. Facilitating cooperative learning that is carefully structured and monitored</li> <li>7. Engaging students in goal setting and providing feedback regarding progress</li> <li>8. Generating and testing hypotheses</li> <li>9. Activating prior knowledge</li> </ol>
Walberg and Paik (2003)	Nine instructional practices that work in K–12 settings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Giving students feedback on homework</li> <li>2. Focusing instruction on specific learning goals</li> <li>3. Providing direct instruction to include sequencing of lessons, guided practice, and immediate feedback</li> <li>4. Making connections between past and present learning and alerting students to the main ideas</li> <li>5. Teaching learning strategies</li> <li>6. Tutoring students one-to-one</li> <li>7. Insisting that students master foundational concepts and skills before moving on to new learning</li> <li>8. Teaching cooperative learning techniques and expecting students to work in cooperative learning groups</li> <li>9. Combining approaches like tutoring, mastery learning, cooperative learning, and strategic instruction</li> </ol>

## Definitions You Need to Know

There are a variety of specialized terms used throughout this book. Some, although familiar in other contexts, will be used in new ways in the chapters ahead. Before you begin Chapter 1, take a few moments for a brief vocabulary lesson.

### Routines

Routines are *desired patterns of behavior—procedures that are executed by either teachers or students*. Examples of routines that WITs regularly teach (i.e., model and explain) to lower elementary students include how to line up and how to sit quietly on the rug during direct instruction. Typical routines that all upper elementary and secondary students need for academic success include how to obtain assignments and class notes if absent or what to do immediately upon entering the classroom. WITs expect the procedures they teach to become habits their students can execute without thinking (e.g., what to do during a fire drill or lockdown, how to line up for dismissal at the end of the period).

### Rubrics

The meaning of the term *rubric*, as used in this book and in the field of education generally, is more complex than the one-word definition you will find in any dictionary: *rule*. In schools, rubrics are *continuums of quality or completeness against which teachers and students measure and evaluate behavior and work products*. Classroom rubrics are clearly articulated expectations of teachers for students, of students for themselves, and students for teachers (if applicable). For example, a work product rubric might describe the qualities and characteristics of a paragraph, an essay, a bulletin board display, or an oral presentation, giving specific information about both the most acceptable and least acceptable versions.

Without rubrics, students are left to guess regarding what their work or behavior should look like. Motivated students must be mind readers to figure out what the teacher wants, and students who don't care will fill the standards vacuum with inappropriate work and behavior. Without rubrics, teachers are forced to be arbitrary in their evaluation of student work and behavior, creating feelings of uncertainty and anxiety in their students. Similar to routines, rubrics are often enhanced and supported by the use of teacher *prompts* and helpful *props*.

### Rules (and Rewards)

Rules are *authoritative principles set forth to guide behavior in classrooms*. They constitute the code of conduct for both students and teachers. Along with rules often come rewards, *positive things that follow a desired response and act to encourage desired behavior*. Rewards are controversial in many circles,

and we later explore a more comprehensive meaning of rewards that goes well beyond stickers and suckers.

## How the With-It Teachers Were Identified

In the pages ahead, you will meet close to 100 WITs from around the country. They teach a variety of subjects and grade levels (K–12). The majority of respondents were nominated by their principals, who used the definition of a with-it teacher found earlier in this Introduction as their selection criteria. A smaller group of teachers was recommended by instructional specialists, literacy coaches, and consultants who had observed the WITs directly in their classrooms. In a few cases, I selected the teachers based on direct knowledge and observations of their teaching. In three instances, principals invited all of their staff members to complete the questionnaire and a small number of teachers out of the total faculty self-selected into the sample.

There were 341 nominations, and I sent the With-It Teacher Questionnaire, found in Resource B, to each one via e-mail. In some cases, technical difficulties resulted in returned e-mails, slightly reducing the number of the original sample. Ninety-seven teachers returned responses via e-mail, fax, and postal mail. For purposes of collating their overall responses and choosing specific quotation, examples, and vignettes, I divided the teachers into two grade-level groups: K–5 (Elementary) and 6–12 (Secondary). About 55% of the respondents fell in the elementary group and 45% fell in the secondary group. These percentages are nearly identical to the percentage of elementary and secondary teachers found in the 3.8 million teachers in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004–2005). The names and specific grade levels of the respondents are found in Resource C.

The length of each response varied widely; the questions were open-ended, and individuals were given the option to skip questions to which answers did not immediately come to mind based on their personal teaching practices. The length of the completed questionnaires ranged from 3 to 18 pages (8 ½" × 11" single-spaced typewritten pages in 12 pt. Times New Roman font). I queried more than 50% of the respondents, asking for more detail regarding specific classroom practices. They responded by sending seating charts, sample lesson plans, brochures, handbooks, rubrics, checklists, rating scales, PowerPoint programs, and photographs to me.

## How With-It Teachers Teach

Given that the nominators (mostly principals and colleagues who knew the teachers and had observed them personally) selected possible participants

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using a set of common criteria (i.e., my definition of a with-it teacher), I expected to find common themes and practices among the respondents regarding how they approached classroom management and instruction. Furthermore, I expected to find that the classroom management and instructional techniques of the WITs as reflected in their responses were similar to those identified in teacher effectiveness literature as displayed in Tables I.1–I.3. That was the case in both instances. The following beliefs, words, and deeds are evident in the classroom management and instructional techniques of WITs as reflected in their responses:

- They believe that all of their students are capable of learning if taught well.
- They believe they can teach anything to any child.
- They are consistent and predictable.
- They believe in routines and spend the first few weeks of school modeling and explaining these routines to their students, whether 5-year-olds or freshmen.
- They are self-disciplined and organized.
- They do not waste time.
- They model and use cooperative learning on a daily basis but consistently hold individual students personally accountable.
- They intentionally model and explain character traits they believe are important to success in school and in life.
- They intentionally model cognitive processing (i.e., their own thinking and problem solving).
- They inspire, motivate, and affirm their students.
- They are specific and consistent regarding their academic and behavioral expectations.
- They intentionally explain and model these expectations from the moment their students enter their classrooms in September.
- They do not threaten, patronize, or excuse their students.
- They are proactive and plan ahead.
- They are highly metacognitive, able to describe in great detail exactly what they do, why they do it, and what the results are.

## Acronyms You Need to Know

Acronyms are used throughout the book as replacements for frequently repeated words and phrases. This is a publishing convention that saves space and time, as well as facilitating the reading process for you. *WIT* stands for with-it teacher, and *WITs* stands for with-it teachers. *3Rs* stands for routines, rubrics, and rules. To help you place the WITs in their respective grade-level contexts, I indicate specific grade levels and content areas in the vignettes and examples, and in the

Roundtables and direct quotes, I use the following designations: *E* for Grades K–5 and *S* for Grades 6–12.

You will find a variety of figures (seating charts, floor plans, lesson plans, instructional materials, and rubrics) throughout the book. They are numbered consecutively within each chapter. For example, Chapter 1's figures are numbered 1.1, 1.2, and so on.

There are also tables (summaries of research or informational items related to the book). You have already encountered several of those in the Introduction. They are also numbered consecutively within each chapter. So in Chapter 1, for example, you will encounter Figure 1.1, Catherine's Floor Plan, and also Table 1.1, Research on Task Engagement.

## What's Ahead?

In the chapters ahead, you will discover in more precise and specific terms exactly how you can become a WIT, a teacher who is able to survive and thrive based on how you teach your routines, rubrics, and rules during the first 3 weeks of the school year. You will have the collective wisdom of 97 with-it teachers to show you how to develop a 3 + 3 = 33 plan for yourself. You will gain a new excitement and a growing sense of empowerment as you realize that you hold the keys to your students' academic success.

